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Kindergarten Pedagogy

Bertha Payne

During the spring quarter we will take up the adaptation of subject-matter to the children of the two grades found in the kindergarten. This will include a consideration of the corresponding growth in expression seen in the children of three, four, and five years, respectively.

The question is frequently asked, When is a child ready to enter the first year of school? or, When has he gained all the kindergarten has to offer? These questions are often answered by saying that the kindergarten affords opportunities to learn and to gain power through play. When the children are ready to work, the school is the proper place. This is rather a misleading distinction, for work goes on in the kindergarten, and play in the school, and rightly so.

If we analyze the question more closely, we find the children developing new needs and new interests that may be classified as follows:

1. The need is felt for preserving a record of his doings, his ideas, his experiences, in symbols; writing follows.
2. Playing at participation in the work of others becomes less satisfying than formerly. The child feels need of an effective part in his little society.
3. In order to reach some goal, the child becomes capable of planning a process in which the end is not immediately achieved, but requires time and forethought.
4. The casual interest begins to show itself strongly. The attention long called out by motion and life is turned more definitely to

search for causes in the physical world. The genuine experiment in nature study has its place here.

All these changes mark the need of the reading and writing, the more continuous work, and the scientific treatment of common experiences which the school supplies.

Before this time comes, however, when a child is still in the kindergarten, he shows different stages quite as marked in their characteristics.

In infancy, as in childhood and in all periods, all have in common a want; the want leads to action.

I. Desire is at first merely for movement.

II. This movement so set up brings consciousness of power: desire to move in certain particular and controlled ways, cooing, lifting head, turning to light, etc.

III. Desire to reproduce certain sensational results, first accidentally experienced: grasping, reaching, throwing, rattling, pounding.

IV. Following the first ideo-motor imitations comes desire to reproduce the actions of others, to use objects as others use them. Repetition follows success. Love of feeling power is thus satisfied.

V. True play-desires appear. New uses are invented for objects, the meaning of one thing is applied to something else. The hat is a cradle, the cookie a wheel, the stick is a horse, and the corn-cob a doll. When this play no longer suffices with but one companion, the kindergarten affords the little society and the tools for more extended plays.

Motive: Expansion of self to take in the meaning and animus of people and things.

VI. Play impulses merge into something more like work. The accident of resemblance

between the child's playthings and real things no longer serves as a basis for his play.

1. Desire to construct appears—to make a conformity to his idea appear in the objective world. The vague heaping and piling of blocks seen in the nursery is supplanted by plan and choice of material for its fitness to the purpose in view.

Motive: To realize the idea by molding and shaping crude material.

2. Imitations, and direct copy of the doings of others develops into more original dramatization with invented situations.

Children who exhibit these characteristics are still in the play stage, and still need concrete representative forms of expression.

In adapting the possible subject-matter of the kindergarten to the youngest children, we find certain characteristics of the three and four year olds that serve as guides to choice under the following heads:

I. Stories:

1. Love of repetition. (a) Preference for the jingle of rhythm in *Mother Goose*; (b) preference for repetition of names and actions, as in the nursery tales of *House that Jack Built*, *Henny Penny*, *The Old Woman and the Pig*.

2. Simplicity in plot.

3. Distinct incident; as in *Jack and the Bean Stalk*.

II. Games:

1. Love of repetition, as in *Looby Loo*, marching and skipping games, finger games, ball games.

2. Surprise, as in hide-and-seek.

3. Use of power without special competitive effort; as in climbing, running, etc.

III. Experiences:

Interest in watching work. Great interest in people, seeing what they do and how, rather than why. Interest in all things showing force and power through motion and sound. The fire-engine, the locomotive, the driver, even the peddler with his cries, all invite imitative play. In nature, animal rather than plant life yields an absorbing interest.

IV. Pictures of people and children, of work and action, and of animals. Flowers and landscapes take a very subordinate place.

Too much cannot be said of the worth of

pictures in giving a center for attention. Past experience is brought up and focused by means of pictures.

V. Forms of expression:

1. Building: (a) Large blocks preferred in cubes and bricks. (b) Co-operation is seldom spontaneous at first, but grows as need arises. (c) Objects made are familiar things, endeared by personal use and association, as beds, tables, and other furniture; or by function that is attractive, as trains, wagons, etc. (d) Mode: Aimless piling often precedes this, and the first object made is usually a happy accident, which illustrates the especial value of blocks as play material. They afford incentive to expression.

2. Modeling: (a) Much vague rolling, pounding, and patting, until the possibilities of the clay are revealed in a chance resemblance. (b) Repetition of the same forms over and over again, until an unusually strong stimulus and strong image lead to truer expression.

3. Painting: (a) Shows same results as in modeling. (b) The brush tells a story before it copies an object. The copying of flowers and fruits is useless when the interest is in events. (c) The first copy or record should not be of a small object, but of a large effect, such as a sky, a field, a row of houses, because the child loves a flood of color, and must satisfy that want first, and because he sees in large, not in detail.

4. Making: (a) Building takes its place at first. (b) When permanence is needed, paper folding and cutting or tearing are useful, because the material is easily managed by weak hands. (c) The wood-work is suitable only for the older children of the kindergarten. (d) The sewing of the kindergarten is not adapted to the youngest for many reasons. It tries the eyes and the nerves.

5. Chief of all materials for the youngest is sand, in boxes, pans, or on rimmed tables. (a) Expression by means of hand, and with use of the whole upper part of the body, is encouraged. (b) Serves as material for modeling. (c) Whenever a review of a walk or a trip is needed, this is one of the best ways for expressing the route taken and things seen, because they can be completely realized; as, for example, the representation of the farm or farmyard; slats may be used for fences, block houses built, and trees set up, gardens laid out, the lakeshore represented. It may epitomize most experiences, and is a good field for the illustration of stories.